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Nation

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Have a happy New Year and the best in 2001!

MANDOW INN

A few of the recent unwilling additions to Quebec's distinct "people" via Bill 99.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM THE PQ

Here's hoping that the Holidays find you and yours well.

I also hope that in this season of caring and giving you had a chance to give of yourselves. It's important to help others at this time of year.

Hopefully, you won't be taking a page from the Parti Quebecois when they passed Bill 99 at the beginning of December.

For those of you not in the know, Bill 99 is quite the piece of work. It's is being hailed a "charter of collective rights" for Quebec. The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights says, "No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality."

The international community recognizes genocide as the taking of children from one identifiable group and assimilating them into another.

Yet in spite of this, Bill 99 would take the Crees, children and adults both, and designate them part of the Quebec "People." In that reality we would be absorbed.... assimilated by the stroke of a pen. Genocide with a pen, a novel concept, that would see the Cree Nation reduced to impotence through no fault of our own. Our nationality grabbed by a thief in the night.

In that small way we further Quebec's path to secession. As Grand Chief Dr. Ted Moses once said, "Is it possible for a mixed population of European origin to demand and exercise a right of self-determination, but for the same population to deny that the indigenous peoples have at least the same rights? The Quebec example clearly demonstrates a double standard based on race. In the separatists' view, Quebecois, whoever they are, have the right; Indians do not."

Do we have a choice in becoming one of the Quebec "People?" It would seem not, at least for the moment. Hypocrisy seems too small a word to encompass what the Parti Quebecois has done.

Remember when, in the last sovereignist referendum, the Crees had a Cree referendum. Then the Inuit and Innu followed suit. In all cases 95 per cent or more decided to stay with Canada. A case of self – determination wiped out once more. Not only are we lumped in with many other unwilling participants but our referendums, Cree referendums, it seems are invalid unless recognized as being so by the Quebec government. Did I mention that it was a charter of collective rights? I have to wonder exactly who embodies the collective rights. Remember the days when Injuns weren't allowed to raise money for court cases. Seems like the good old days are coming back.

Want to know something. I don't want the good old days. They were the days of assimilation. I had hoped we were moving forward.

Bill 99, as Ted Moses said, is a double standard. Don't claim rights that aren't yours to claim unilaterally.

As Santa would say, "I know who's been naughty and I know who's been nice." Let's hope that there is some coal in certain stockings this year. Damn! Must have watched the Grinch or something this year. I know someone stole something and let's hope that Bouchard's heart will grow.... Naw, it will never happen, this is real life, not Doctor Seuss.

byWill Nicholls

Contents

NEWS

5 -Free the man
-Forestry Deal

7 -Friendship Center Meeting
-briefs

FEATURE

10 El Dorado to....
-Columbia

UNDER THE NORTHERN SKY

17 Cree spoken here

19 Cree Artists and artisans meet

23 Odjick Joins Canadiens

24 Classifieds

ON THE COVER

Cree territory during snawfall

Photographer:Will Nicholls

Cover Design: MONA LAVIOLETTE

Rez notes

BY THE ONE AND ONLY

Meeting of the minds

This issue, both REZnotes writers are together and writing this column. This is a conversation (supposed to be an interview).

TOAO- "So, how was your Christmas?" I ask Ndiamon. "Mine wasn't so bad this year, got my black socks (again) and some new longjohns. What kinda loot did you get?"

NDIAMON- Loot? Is that what they call longjohns up here? They call them sportswear in Montreal. And I think they call them pyjamas in other parts of Cree territory. Anyway, what's X-mas like in Greatest Whale?

TOAO- That's not as bad as the rubber shorts I got during my bed wetting days but to answer your question, X-mas is usually cold around here and sometimes Santa's reindeer get shot at and eaten, I think because they look so much like the caribou that infest this area. Yup, caribou are the bane of the environment and also for landing aircraft, have to go and shoo them off the runway just so the plane can land. Santa doesn't have the problem though, 'cause he just lands on rooftops.

NDIAMON- That's funny, I've been here for almost 12 hours and I haven't seen a single caribou. Must be because of the blizzard that's been raging nonstop. I wish it would stop 'cause I want to shoot me a baby caribou right from your front window. Hey, what's the plural of caribou?

TOAO- Let me see...one caribou, two caribi? I suspect that the plural of caribou is herd. I think you'll be here long enough if this little storm (you call a blizzard) doesn't let up and the plane doesn't make it in and then you'll get your chance to pick off a baby caribou out the back door. Got you FAC? I'll have to report you, you know, in case you miss and hit one of the other hundred or so hunters in the area.

NDIAMON- ("FAC" for all you non-shooters is a piece of paper that says you can own and operate a firearm. A bit like a drivers license but not as dangerous.) Hey man, how's it been writing Rez Notes for the past few months? Has it helped you pick up any chicks at the social club? Have you received any hate mail yet?

TOAO- I did get some threats from politicians for revealing their dirty laundry in the election fever column, so far, and some old ladies, who I think don't read English tried to kiss me on my cheek, mistaking me for some long lost relative and that's about it. Not too much glamour in this job, not like you anyways, making movies and all that.

NDIAMON- Yeah, being threatened by politicians, I miss that. I think everyone at The Nation misses that. It hasn't happened in a while. Walter, where are you when we need you?

So, why won't you reveal your true identity? Will you ever? How much money would you accept? And are we going to the pub tonight? My treat.

TOAO- Well, I did a world wide search to see if anyone else had the same name as me and I couldn't find any, I couldn't even find my own name. So I figured that being called the one and only should do and I stuck to that. I use the misnomer quite often, but no-one seems to get it, no matter how hard I drop the hint. Even when I tell them I do the Rez notes, while you've been off for a while, doesn't seem to ring any bells. So I figure, why not tell everyone. Next year, I guess.

NDIAMON- You didn't answer my other questions. Are we going to the pub tonight? Should we brave the wolves and polar bears and the blizzard for a pitcher or three? I hear there's been a lot of action there lately. And the food is apparently not too bad. Let's do it man! Drop everything, steal a ski-doo. We'll drink to a job soon to be well done.

TOAO- You kidding, ever see a polar bear up close. Besides, with this kind of weather the pub and the club are both closed. NDIAMON, where did you go. Geez, he left without me, probably need his dose of antifreeze.

Happy New Year, everyone, you too neil.

- The one and only.

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Nation

FORESTRY TALKS END ON ANGRY NOTE

Six months of negotiations with Quebec on forestry appear to have collapsed dramatically.

Quebec has presented a final offer to Crees on forestry and other issues, but Cree officials say it's not good enough.

"I would personally have a hard time recommending it to the Cree leadership. It would be a hard sell to the trappers," said Abel Bosum, head Cree negotiator.

The negotiations took a bizarre twist on Dec. 14 that has added to Cree frustrations.

That was the day Quebec presented its final offer to Cree negotiators in provincial offices in downtown Montreal.

The meeting started at noon. Half an hour into the meeting, as Cree negotiators were still studying the offer, the government officials suddenly announced they had planned a press conference for that day to announce the offer publicly.

Even more odd, provincial officials refused to tell the Crees where or when the press conference was to be held.

Crees eventually figured it out – the event was held at 2:30 in Quebec City – but it was too late to get someone to the scene.

Cree officials angrily left the meeting in Montreal. "I think it's a provocation," said Bosum. "They decided to negotiatie through the media. We did not even have time to review the offer."

Quebec's offer includes:

● $50 million over five years on forestry, to be renegotiated afterwards based on forestry levels. The amount includes $10 million for a new Indoho Trappers Fund, which would assist trappers affected by forestry. It also includes $5 million for training Crees to work in forestry (Crees would be guaranteed 15 percent of jobs in the forestry sector after 10 years), $5.4 million for economic development and a $10-million "social fund" to compensate trappers affected by ongoing forestry operations.

The main Cree concern here is that there is no provision to compensate trappers for past damages. Also, Cree officials believe the $10-million social fund is not enough to sustain trappers beyond the current generation; they were asking for $30 million, which would be more in line with what was offered in past agreements signed with Hydro-Quebec.

● Crees would have to drop their 1998 lawsuit on forestry. Cree officials object to doing this given that there are no provisions for past forestry damages.

● Some aspects of the forestry deal would be enshrined under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. Crees object that key elements of the deal will not be protected in this way.

● Quebec and Crees would create a joint committee to manage forest activites in Iyiyuuschii. The problem, for Crees, is the president of the committee would be chosen solely by Quebec, rather than by joint appointment.

● Quebec will make available to Crees 5 percent of the annual forestry harvest inside of five years.

● Quebec will increase the number of wildlife conservation officers; the new positions will all be occupied by Crees.

by Alex Roslin

continued on page 7

Stick it to the Man—help free Peltier!

It's not every day that FBI agents put on their trenchcoats, go to the White House and march in a demonstration.

What has the Man so riled up?

They're demonstrating on Dec. 15 to pressure their boss, President Bill Clinton, not to grant executive clemency to Leonard Peltier.

Described as the U.S. version of Nelson Mandela, Peltier has been in jail since 1976 for the murders of two FBI agents – a crime there is little evidence he committed. Clinton has said he will give Peltier's clemency request an "honest look-see" before he leaves the White House.

FBI Director Louis Freeh has strongly protested the idea. So has the FBI Agents' Association, which is organizing the rally. Such a protest is extremely rare.

One agent told ABC News, "It will be a very dignified and quiet gathering of a couple hundred people in raincoats."

Meanwhile, Peltier's case has just got another boost from Canada.

Fred Kaufman, a retired judge of the Quebec Court of Appeal, says evidence against Peltier was falsified. He has written asking Clinton to free Peltier.

In October, Kaufman held an inqui-ry into Peltier's case in Toronto on behalf of the Innocence Project, a group that attempts to expose wrongful convictions.

In eight years, the group has freed 38 people, including four on death row.

Kaufman, a judge for 14 years, previously headed an official inquiry into the wrongful conviction of Guy Paul Morin.

Kaufman heard testimony from five people, including a key witness, Myrtle Poor Bear.

Poor Bear's testimony in 1976 was key in getting Peltier extradited from Canada to the U.S. for his trial.

She claimed at the time that she saw the FBI agents get shot, and also that Peltier spoke to her about it afterward.

In Toronto, Poor Bear said she had fabricated her story under pressure from FBI agents. Poor Bear claimed the FBI kept her apart from her family for long peri-

continued on page 7

Rupert House Letters 1835-36

From Eastmain; Oct 23; Thomas Corcoran, chief.

I much regret to have to inform you that only 13 ½ barrels of blubber have been procured during the summer, owing principally to the absence of our best "Whale hunters" who have gone to Ungava with the view of taking up their residence in that part of the country for the ensuing winter; & in some degree to fear on the part of those Eastmain Indians who still remain in the neighbourhood of Whale R. which the appearance of the Esquimaux, who have been in great numbers about Little Whale River this summer, has excited among them. The Indians & Esquimaux met at Little Whale R., some skirmishing has taken place between them, but nothing of a serious nature... This encounter took place previous to the schooner's arrival at Big Whale River & the Indians' departure thence to the southward on the 21st Aug. may be attributed to it. No inducement whatever could prevail on them to remain.... (On its return the schooner provides ammunition to the northward goose hunters.)

The Ungava Fort Hunters, who took their departure hence for Fort Chimo on the 15 June last in company with four of our best Northern Indians & their families, ...only left Big Whale River on or about the 20 July. (Does this make sense? What yr. is he talking about?) Jacob Atkinson & all his sons, to whom I sent a message to go to Ungava, have also accompanied the Ungava Fort Hunters but, besides all these, no less than 30 canoes of the Northern Eastmain Indians, including men, women & children, left there with them, but whether it is with the view of going all the way or not is yet unknown here. All those who had any furs or leather are amongst the number, which may account for our not getting any of either from the northward this summer.

(Fall goose hunt of 1600 termed "tolerably well". The schooner proceeds on to RH where it is laid up for the winter.)

(One of the EM Indians who went to Fort Chimo in spring was KONNAHWAPPAHMAWGUN.)

to Moose; Nov.18: (Miles asks for leather from Moose since none is forthcoming from the north.)

to Waswanipi-Feb.25, 1836

...I am fearful the Indians of the Interior are giving too much encouragement to the horde of trappers who now infest the most valuable part of this District. I am fully aware of the advantages which would arise to the concern at large could we prevent the Indians form thus changing their posts (he is referring to some RH Inds. who've moved to Waswanipi area) but really, I am doubtful if it can altogether be insisted upon, in the present state of the Interior, without much risk of their furs going to Canada by some of these marauders.

It has been usual hitherto that this District obtained its supplies of bark for Emain & this post from Moosefactory, & frequently much disappointment has been felt on the coast from the badness of the quality....The country around Woswonaby, I understand, abounds with excellent bark. I have therefore to request that you will procure for us annually all the bark you possibly can.

to Nichicun; Robert Chilton chief; Feb. 25.

I would also wish to know if you have yet seen any of the Indians from the north of Whale River, who are in the habit of traversing the country from thence to the shores of Esquimaux Bay, Straits of Bellisle. Every exertion should be made to fall in with the Indians this spring who go to meet an officer & 4 men from the St. Lawrence annually a t Mushoweaggan or Maincougan Lake, about eight days march from your place Eastward, from whom they obtain large supplies of ammunition, rum & tobacco at a cheap rate, but for other goods pay enormously dear. I have been told that this officer & men are from the establishments of the Company, but this is merely supposition. (Chilton is to intercept these Inds. & persuade them to come to Nichicun.)

to Gov.Simpson; March 5

I am sorry to acquaint you that the Interior of the District is now infested during summer with numerous parties of trappers form the St. Maurice who are penetrating far north as Mistassiny. There are likewise other marauders from...Manicougan Lake who have been in the neighbourhood of Timmiskimay & actually taken from the Indians by force about 60 MB.

...you will observe that he (John Spencer) proposes the abandonment of Pike Lake & to attach the three families of Indians belonging to that Post to Mistassiny & Woswonaby, as only one pack of furs has been procured there the two last years....

(It seems incoming letters are no longer included in the book. See next section.)

to Moose; June 6 (Reports that 200 MB worth of fox furs were eaten by a wolverine at Big River)....the Indians to the north of Emain leave the coast for inland about the latter end of the month of January for the purpose of hunting beaver & procuring deer for subsistence, when they usually deposit their furs previously killed until their return.

to EM; June 23 (3 EM Indians have brought two new boats from Moose to RH- CROW, WABBINNAYWISKUM & an unnamed man.)

1836-37 B.186/b/31

6th To the wife of each Indian entitling himself to any of the premiums (even a coat only) in the foregoing instances, 1/3 yard plain cloth & 3 yds. gartering and lace may be given under the denomination of a pair of sleeves.

7th Suitable coats may be given to the sons, or to one or more of the sons of Indians as it may be considered desirable for the interests of the Honble Company to gratify in this way, always having due regard to the quantity of furs brought by the Indian and the several members of his family who acknowledge him their head or chief.

8th The premiums & rewards specified to be given in the foregoing Rules to be all included in the expenses of the Year of the Acct. of which the Furs are Received, and are not to be placed on the Inventories as hitherto has been the case in the Ruperts's River District.

Con't next month

Free Peltier...

continued from page 5

ods and threatened her life in an attempt to coerce her to give false testimony.

The Toronto hearing was the first time Poor Bear had testified in any venue about the case.

Poor Bear was mysteriously dropped from the prosecution's witness list at Peltier's 1977 double murder trial. A district attorney told the court only that she was no longer considered "competent."

Once in the U.S., Peltier was convicted of the double murder largely on the basis of ballistics evidence, which has since been brought into doubt.

According to a report in the Globe and Mail, Kaufman judged Poor Bear to be a credible witness this time around. "I say without hesitation that each of the witnesses appeared honest and credible," he wrote in a letter to President Clinton about his investigation.

"As you can see from her evidence, she acted under duress at the time, and much of what she said was false," Kaufman wrote.

"I am satisfied that if this had been known when the extradition hearings took place, the request to extradite Peltier would likely have been refused."

You too can stick it to the Man. Help Clinton help Peltier out of jail by calling the White House Comments Line at (202) 456-1111.

Forestry...

continued from page 5

● Quebec will give Crees $120 million over five years to settle all outstanding claims related to economic and social development issues in the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. This would include $80 million to settle what remains of the so-called "MOU" deal of 1998 and an extra $28.25 million.

● Crees would have to release Quebec from future claims in this area, again something Crees object to.

"It's contrary to the understanding we had at the beginning," explained Bosum. "The James Bay Agreement is a living agreement. There is no way we are going to cap the agreement."

Community still divided after meeting

The atmosphere was tense and emotional as members of Montreal's Native community gathered at the city's Native Friendship Centre to discuss the troubled facility.

The centre's embattled new leadership set a strict agenda and tried to cut off any off-topic questions or complaints.

Outside, a shouting match erupted when one community member was told he couldn't attend the meeting, allegedly due to security considerations.

The meeting was held Dec. 8 to give community members a chance to discuss how the centre has been run.

In the end, many community members left feeling just as bitter as before.

The meeting started off with a prayer, followed by discussion of the centre's financial troubles. The centre's new board, elected on Oct. 20, presented a gloomy picture, saying the facility was nearly bankrupt when they took over.

They presented documents that stated the centre was $186,000 in debt as of Oct. 31. The centre also reportedly didn't have enough money to operate until the end of the fiscal year, next March 31.

But audience members immediately questioned the numbers. The figures did not come with explanatory notes or a letter signed by an accountant attesting to their reliability.

A financial advisor to the centre had difficulty explaining to the audience how some of the figures were arrived at. At one point, he was forced to admit there was a mistake in the dates on one page.

Centre officials either refused to answer our questions or didn't call back.

Next up at the meeting was the centre's proposed financial restructuring plan. It included staff layoffs that the centre says will save $104,000.

The centre says it will still finish the fiscal year with a deficit of $59,000, which will be added to the existing debt.

Many audience members were dubious about the new board's portrayal of finances. "Some facts were stretched to the limit. To me, the financial statements (that were) presented were smoke and mirrors," said Ida LaBillois-Montour, who was suspended from the centre on Oct. 31 after 14 years as executive director.

The new board members had some supporters in the audience, who praised the board for having "saved the centre."

Also on the agenda was the report of an outside investigator who had been called in after LaBillois-Montour and her assistant were suspended.

The investigator found sloppy bookkeeping and poor human-resources management at the centre. He said the centre had had trouble raising enough funds to cover the growing demand for services.

He also chastized the new board for how it acted with regard to LaBillois-Montour: "I do believe that they should have at least allowed the executive director to meet with them to discuss these issues prior to issuing a suspension."

LaBillois-Montour, who plans to sue the centre, and her assistant were eventually let go from their jobs.

by Alex Roslin

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William Nicholls would like to take this time to wish each one of his favourite Aunties and their families the best in the New Year from his family. P.S. if you have any dirt or gossip, I would be willing to accept it as a late Xmas Gift. Call 1-514-272-3077 now!

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The Waswanipi Band wants you to...
Have a wounderful and prosprous New Year!

Nemaska First Nation
The Nemaska band wishes you and the Cree Nation a very Happy New Year!

From El Dorado to Plan Colombia

Senate building in Bogotá

Colombia – mythical land of the Golden Indian, "El Dorado." Home to the magical cloudforests of the Andean Mountains. And one of the most violent places on earth. Our writer meets the embattled Embera indigenous people in the heart of the warzone.

By Mary Ellen Davis

After landing in Bogotá, Colombia's capital, flight passengers make their way to customs through long corridors of El Dorado Airport. They can't avoid seeing the showcases displaying delicate replicas of ancient Native artifacts and photographic blow-ups of similar items. Travelers are informed that the original works, made of gold, are on display at the "Museo del Oro," the Gold Museum.

For many centuries, the first peoples of the Americas have followed the tradition of placing precious or symbolic objects within the graves, for the use of the dead during their journey into the beyond. Dignitaries were buried with ornaments, jewelry and miniature figures. Europeans who first traveled to the Americas were amazed by the great attention given to the departed.

In 1553, explorer Pedro Liga de Leon expressed his disbelief: "In most parts of the Indias (the Americas), people spend more time preparing and decorating the graves where they will lie once dead, than improving the house they must live in while alive."

Other reports were soon sent back to Spain about the so-called Golden Man, or "El Dorado." In 1636, explorer Juan Rodriguez Freyle wrote: "On the lakeshore, a large raft is made of reeds. The heir is first unclothed then covered with gold dust, while the raft is loaded with gold and jewels. The Golden Indian makes his offering by shedding gold when he dives into the lake and by casting all gold and emeralds into the water. The raft returns to shore. Then celebrations start,

ending with a ceremony where the new governor is acknowledged as lord."

El Dorado soon became the name of a mythical land to be conquered by Europe. Spanish troops were sent to the Americas to take over territory, wealth and resources, both material and human. The "moral" claim behind the Conquest was to "civilize" the local population by converting it to Catholicism.

unexploited resources – forests, water, minerals, biodiversity, etc. Their territories – although recognized by the law – are now coveted by multinational corporations, the state and armed groups, all competing for control over resources.

Colombia's Aboriginal communities have been dragged into a spiral of violence, as their lands are gradually converted to war zones.

> Four passengers are squeezed in the back seat of the car, three in front and nobody is talking. Today in Colombia, distrust is part of the basic survival kit...

In the land now called Colombia, some Native communities surrendered. Others resisted fiercely and were eventually decimated. Many retreated into secluded regions. In the process of trying to survive disintegration, those not killed were often submitted to the brutality of slavery, disease, dispossession and assimilation. European invaders soon looted the graves and other sacred sites. They sent the gold overseas, where it was melted into crowns, scepters and chalices for the use of the colonial aristocracy or church authorities.

The Museo del Oro collection is what remains – consisting of sacred offerings left unplundered, found in the depths of sacred lakes.

Native presence

Colombia is a country three-quarters the size of Quebec. There are almost 900,000 indigenous people – over 2 percent of the country's 40 million citizens – belonging to 82 ethnic groups who speak 64 languages.

There are also uncounted groups still living in the Amazon forest, with whom no contact has yet been made. Native lands (officially called "resguardos" or reserves) now occupy a quarter of the national territory. The largest are in the Amazon region, where the traditional lifestyle of hunting and gathering depends on vast forested areas.

As in many countries, most Aboriginals live in distant regions where there are still many

"Because of poverty and violence, many families have to abandon their communities," says Colombian Senator Jesus Piñacué Achiecué, who is a member of the Nasa (or Paez) indigenous people. "I see more and more Natives begging in the streets of Medellin and Bogotá."

There are almost 2 million people internally displaced in Colombia, well over half of them children. Sadly, violence has not spared the cities either. Survival is difficult. Urban zones have been plagued with murders and kidnappings, many committed by right-wing paramilitaries or leftist guerrillas.

In Colombia, Aboriginals live in a great variety of lands. Among the country's 14 departments, only one of them has no Native population. Scattered across the national territory, they live in the higher and lower slopes of the Andes, the tropical forests of the lowlands, deserts, grasslands and high-altitude pastures or "paramo."

They also used to live in temperate mountain areas, but brutal takeovers have been happening over the last century, fueled by the demand for coffee. Higher ranges and valleys were once covered with forest. They used to be known for their magical virgin "cloud-forests," which are high-altitude forests covered most of the time in clouds and are home to unique flora and fauna. But in some forested areas, trees have been cleared to plant opium poppies and coca plants, which are sold to heroin and cocaine manufacturers.

The temptation of a better income has been hard to resist for both Native and non-Native farmers living in extreme poverty. The consequences can be tragic. The lack of trees may worsen natural disasters, such as earthquake-triggered landslides. Also, power structures within the illegal drug trade weaken traditional systems of community cohesion. And the violence that comes with drugs increases social tension and division.

Land, self-government and cultural rights

"Over the centuries, we the Paez have resisted against the multiple forms of ongoing colonial violence – enforcement of a foreign culture and religion, expropriation, more recently political violence, and now the interests of drug lords and multinational companies," says Senator Jesus Piñacué, who is 36.

Before becoming a senator, Jesús Piñacué was a Native-rights activist in the southwest department of Cauca.

Interviewed in the Senate's office building, he speaks proudly and calmly. "We are now trying to act within the political arena," says Piñacué. Colombia's new constitution, amended in 1991, calls for at least two Native representatives within the Senate, in an effort to reflect the Aboriginal population.

Piñacué ran as a candidate for the Native Social Alliance (known by its Spanish acronym, ASI). Thanks to strong support among Native and non-Native voters, he was actually voted in rather than designated for one of the two earmarked positions, becoming the third Native to occupy a seat.

Jesús Piñacué joined the Cauca Regional Native Council in 1980 and became an outstanding grassroots leader and eventually the council's president. The council first fought for land against private landowners' encroachment. The struggle met with bitter opposition and many died trying to defend the territory.

The Paez did not want to rely on protection from Marxist guerrillas already present in the area. In 1977, some of them formed the Quintín Lame Armed Movement, in order to protect communities trying to recuperate land.

At the same time, the Cauca Regional Native Council understood that the fight was for more than land. The new rallying cry, "Land, self-government and cultural rights," would soon be adopted by Latin America's growing Native-rights movement. The Quintín Lame lasted several years and dissolved in the late '80s, when Aboriginal leaders were invited to help write the new constitution.

"It has not been easy for our political movement to try to fit into the parliamentary game. To make things worse, we are faced with the actual president's hostility to our cause," says Piñacué.

"Dialogue with the government seems impossible. Issues concerning Native populations are simply not a priority. However, this is also not a time for armed resistance. What we need in this country is a space for dialogue, for mutual respect. The war is only spreading and deepening, and none of the combatants show any concern for minority rights. Native people in Colombia are the victims of both guerrillas and paramilitary violence."

Senator Jesús Piñacué was a Native-rights activist

But Piñacué is still defiant: "We have never given up the fight for Native self-government."

Building dams in a country at war

The morning flight from Bogotá to Montería, capital of the department of Córdoba, offers a view of the great Andean mountain ranges stretching towards the north.

We are in the northwestern region of the country, near the border with Panama and the Caribbean.

The ruggedness of the mountains makes travel by land extremely long and difficult. Two main rivers – the Cauca and the Magdalena – collect rainwater from the "cordilleras," becoming powerful and dangerous currents. Once they reach the northern plains, they expand and lazily wind their way to the Atlantic coast. Whoever lives close to the river knows the risk of floods. Many have also seen bodies floating downstream, ever since the war started 52 years ago.

A smaller river – the Sinú – can also be seen from the jet, before Montería. It's snaking path is cut midway by the Urrá dam, whose waters have flooded 7,000 hectares of land. Of the flooded land, 7 percent belonged to a reserve of the Embera Katío indigenous people, called the Embera Katío Reserve of Upper Sinú.

The flooded land was 500 hectares of prime tropical forest, nestled in the last folds of the Andean Cordillera.

The Emberas are now fighting against a proposed second phase of the Urrá megaproject, which would flood 10 times more land. The dam is being partly financed by the Canadian government's Export Development Corporation.

After hearing the Emberas' call for international support, Canadian non-governmental organizations got involved. They expressed concern over the hydroelectric project and called for a close examination of the EDC's activities.

Développement et Paix, based in Montreal, was instrumental in helping the Emberas at a critical time by funding some local development projects and by organizing an emergency

support network with other Canadian groups such as the Interchurch Committee on Human Rights in Latin America and Probe International.

Before leaving Montreal, I phoned the office of the Grand Councils of Alto Sinú and Verde Rivers ("Cabildos Mayores") to know if I could travel to the state of Córdoba to meet them and visit the area.

One of our concerns was safety. The region is often shaken by violence. Since 1996, several Embera leaders and activists have been killed by paramilitary death squads, as well as local priests and professionals who dared to support their movement. A friend with whom I stayed in Bogotá knows the area and insisted I must be careful, for my own sake and that of others. Always move around with someone from the community, do not let your conversations be overheard, always be alert, etc.

In a way, the conflict has split Colombia into three – the official state, territories controlled by right-wing paramilitary troops and large demilitarized zones under leftist guerrilla management.

This child's father was killed in the fighting

Córdoba and the neighbouring region of Urabá happen to be where the paramilitary first appeared and established permanent headquarters. The United Self-Defence Units of Colombia (AUC), as they call themselves, count an estimated 11,000 fighters. There is strong evidence that the Colombian army has actively supported the AUC, even for its bloodiest operations. Their guerrilla adversaries are the leftist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN).

Colombia's First Nations organizations, including the Emberas, have adopted the position of "active neutrality" and have asked all sides to respect their right to stay out of the war.

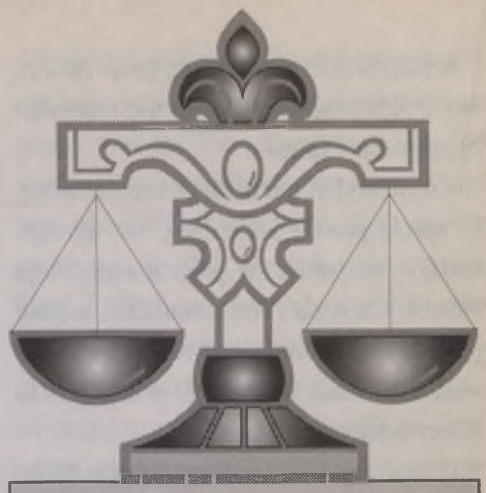
But fighters of both extremes have not been listening, nor has the army. There is continuous trespassing in the Emberas' reserve.

The conflict has cost 35,000 lives over the last 10 years. There are now 4,000 politically or socially motivated murders per year. According to a United Nations report, 75 percent of killings in the country are committed by the paramilitary, 18 percent by the guerrilla and 4 or 5 percent by state security forces.

Before landing, the plane flies over a patchwork of cattle ranches. Many of the owners are staunch AUC supporters. I was told by phone that an Embera would be waiting for me. I'd recognize him from the beads he'd be wearing.

Sure enough, a serious young man is there. We take a taxi to Montería and travel another 50 kilometres to Tierralta in a shared taxi ride, or "colectivo." We hardly exchange a word. Four passengers squeezed in the back seat, three in front and everybody so quiet? Quite unusual, for a rather verbal culture. But today in Colombia, distrust is part of the basic survival kit...

On either side of the road, all I see are endless grazing lands, cattle herds and a variety of unfamiliar birds. Somewhere behind a small hill, there's a hidden AUC camp that almost everybody knows about.



Democracy in the balance

"In Colombia, violence of all sorts is the single largest threat to democracy. In fact, there have been four times as many deaths in Colombia than in the Balkan wars...

"Colombia has the largest internal refugee problem in the world, after Angola and the Sudan. Seven Colombians are kidnapped and 12 are murdered every day. The Colombian state is forced to combat the best-funded insurgent groups in the world, violent paramilitary organizations and powerful drug lords that benefit from a thriving illegal narcotics industry.

"The state has earned a reputation for being highly corrupt and inefficient in providing basic public goods for its citizens."

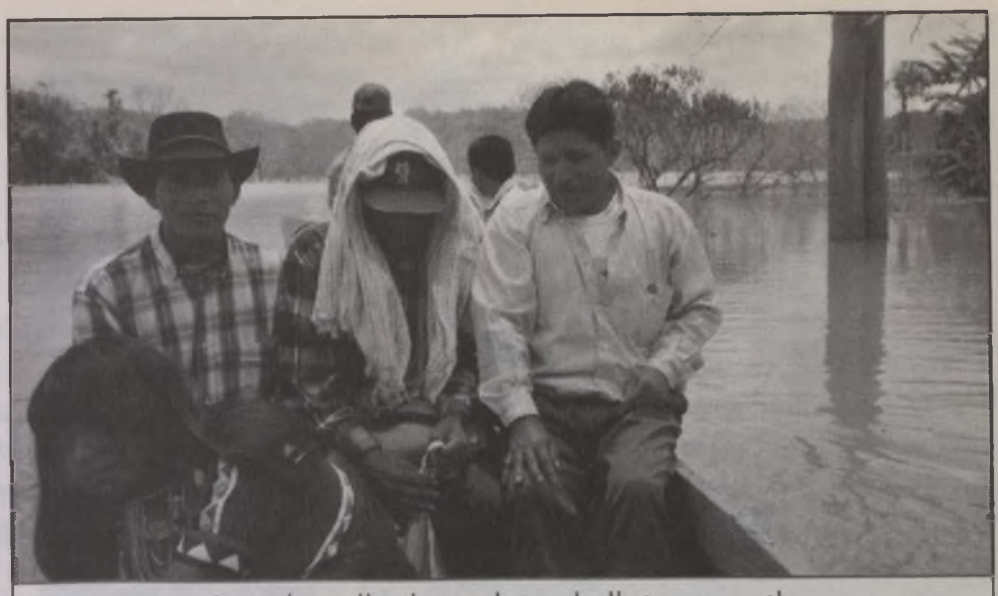
From Maxwell A. Cameron, "Threats to Democracy in the Americas," a paper published the Canadian Foundation for the Americas, May 2000.

At first sight, Tierralta is a small, quiet tropical town where people enjoy riding bicycles. But we are in paramilitary territory. Those who live here know who's who. Right-wing armed groups have key people here. The last few months have been calm, though. In fact, no Embera has been murdered since over a year.

The office of the regional council, or Cabildo, is in Tierralta – several hours away from the reserve – because there's access to electricity and phone lines. In many nearby communities no such infrastructure exists.

The Emberas are busy preparing an important assembly of Native authorities that will mark a victory after years of struggle against the Urrá dam project. We will soon travel to the village where they meet.

Meanwhile, I'm briefly introduced to Emiliano Domicó Majoré, "noko mayor" (governor) of Sinú River, to several Cabildo advisors, and to some "kapunia" (non-Native) technical consultants. ("Kapunia" literally means loose, free, unattached.)



On route on the dammed river to their community

At first sight, Tierralta is a small, quiet tropical town where people enjoy riding bicycles. But we are in paramilitary territory...

Among the Embera advisors, I meet Kimy Pernia Domicó, who traveled to Ottawa in November 1999 to testify against the dam project before Canada's Parliamentary Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

I also meet Miguel Domicó Garcia. He is president of the Territorial Council for Clearing the Reserve, which is part of the Cabildo. They have a sensitive job: to "clear" the reserve of armed groups, illegal wood-cutters and crops, and other encroachers.

Miguel introduces me to his young daughter Maritza. She accompanies him wherever he must go, he tells me. It's hard for him to find time to spend at home. His marriage broke up because of his perpetual absence.

Miguel was a close friend of Lucindo Domicó Cabrera, a young Cabildo advisor killed a year before, a few blocks away from where we are talking. Lucindo had organized health programs and was an outstanding community leader, says Miguel. He talks with sadness of his friend's death and the killing of other community members.

We talk almost whispering in the hotel room, while Maritza sits quietly, with an inquisitive look. We are speaking in the language of the conqueror, Spanish, not her own. Miguel's great hope is the strengthening of Embera communities.

People of the river, forest and mountain

In his statement before Canadian Members of Parliament last year, Kimy Pernia said: "Until very recently, our river, its tributaries, marshes and wetlands were incredible rich in bio-diversity, with many, many species of fish and animals. We are the guardians of the last remaining tropical rainforest of the Caribbean coast of Colombia.

"In 1995, the Urrá dam blocked and diverted the course of the Sinú River. Nothing has been the same since then. The dam has brought death to our people: death to the fish, death to members of our community who have seen their source of protein vanish and death to our leaders who have protested or challenged the dam."

There are 2,400 Embera Katío living in the Upper Sinú Reserve. About 1,600 belong to the Grand Councils of Upper Sinú and Verde Rivers. (Other Embera people who live along the Esmeraldas River chose not to join the struggle against Urrá.)

The Emberas have said they were not properly informed or consulted about the dam project, until the process had well begun. Hydro and state officials had talked with a handful of Emberas, not the whole community.

This is a violation of the Colombian Constitution, which guarantees Native people the right to be consulted about any project that may affect their territories and lives. The failure to consult also violates an international treaty signed by Colombia with the International Labour Organization.

Work started on phase one of the dam in October 1993. In December of that year, the community sent an emergency message of protest to Colombia's President.

In November 1994, 660 Emberas gathered in 42 canoes and traveled down the river in a symbolic "Do Wabura" (Farewell to the River). The expedition had two purposes: to strengthen collective awareness of the dam's presence and to alert downstream dwellers who were poorly-informed: farmers, fishermen, Natives and non-Native.

But the wall still rose over the river and it became obvious there would be a considerable loss of biodiversity and radical shift in patterns of survival. The Emberas demanded adequate consultation and protection, as well as an independent environmental assessment and a review of the impacts on traditional lifestyles, health and transportation systems. By 1995, the Emberas had won some international attention.

When they started their protest campaign, little did the Emberas know how many interests lay behind the dam. Arrayed against them were not only foreign investors, but also local politicians, wealthy landowners and cattle ranchers. Some illegally acquired huge areas where marshes were expected to dry up downriver from the flooded areas.

Articles published in local and national newspapers branded the Emberas and their advisors as subversives, suggesting that they be left to drown when the waters rise. Right-wing senators said, "Colombians should rise up against Indians opposed to development."

Paramilitary leader Carlos Castaño openly expressed his disapproval of the Emberas' resistance to the dam, another way of saying he had included them on AUC's hit list.

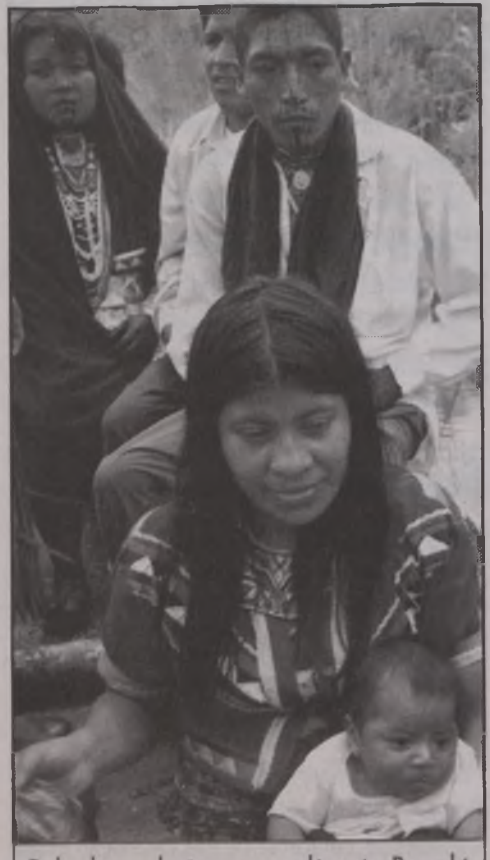
In spite of assassinations and attacks by the paramilitary, the Emberas persisted in their struggle. On Dec. 1, 1999, 168 Emberas started an 800-kilometre march from Tierralta to Bogotá, where they camped out in the gardens of the Ministry of Environment.

People brought them food, blankets, warm clothes, knowing how cold the city's high-altitude climate would be for the Emberas. In April, Native senators Jesús Pi–acué and Francisco Rojas Birry joined them and started a hunger strike, along with two Native members of Congress. The squat lasted four and a half months.

On April 19, 2000, the Emberas achieved an important victory. An agreement was finally reached between the private company Urrá S.A., the government and the Cabildos.

> "The river lives, breathes and moves. It has a memory; it tells stories of ancient times, when fish were people and when our ancestors traveled along the rivers, as paths leading to the world below."

The document satisfies the major demands of the Emberas – suspension of Urrá's phase 2, eventual dismantling of phase 1, a share of profits, relocation, a study on increasing the size of the reserve, the company's support for fish repopulation and river transportation, an environmental plan of action and a committee to supervise the implementation of the agreements.



Baby born during occupation in Bogotá

There would also be human-rights monitoring, protection of threatened leaders and advisors, measures against impunity, and – curiously enough – a guarantee that civil servants will abstain from false accusations against community leaders and members.

Not only were the Emberas delighted by the victory, but so were many other citizens. At last, a movement had won a fight without weapons. It was almost too good to be true: will the agreements be respected?

True, lives were lost and disrupted in the process. Senator Jesús Piñacué was pleasantly surprised, but remained somewhat doubtful: "I wonder how foreign investors will react."

The veins of Mother Earth

We take a "colectivo" ride for the first stretch of our voyage to the victory gathering of Native authorities.

On our way, we pass by the dam that has caused so much harm. From the boat landing beside the dam, it's almost three hours in a motor-driven canoe to reach the village, first across the reservoir, then up the Verde River.

The landscape is eerie. Dead trees emerge everywhere. There are muddy shores where the water level keeps redefining itself. I can imagine how people, both Native and non-Native, must have had to tear themselves away from the hills and valleys...

The canoe is communal property. It carries 15 people and is packed with goods. We stop on the way to pick up people and drop others off. A young Nokowera (woman governor) boards and is strongly applauded. She is splendidly body-painted.

Embera women and men of all ages, as well as children, paint their faces and bodies with a

natural dye made from a fruit. The designs are intricate and varied, with their own symbolic meaning. After a few days, the painting gets blurry and ultimately vanishes. For collective events such as the meeting, participants want to look their best, so many wear a brand new painting with great pride.

Any group reaching a village is warmly greeted and cheered by as many people as possible, including some "alguaciles" (guards). There are two kinds: village guards who are unarmed, and forest guards who carry a spear. Both have gathered here and will be very busy the next few days.

Someone guides me to one of the common lodges. Over 60 people from other communities will also be sleeping here for several nights, in a complex arrangement of hammocks, mosquito nets and straw mats. The lodges are comfortable, built a few feet above the ground, the sides half-open underneath a thatched palm-leaf roof. Cooking is usually done on one edge, over an earth-beaten platform.

But for the huge meeting, cooking happens closer to the river, in very large quantities to feed the hundreds of guests. At meal-time, three disciplined rows are formed – men, women and children, each holding their dish, waiting for a generous portion of rice, yucca and barbecued meat.

I'm an object of curiosity for children and women. I feel they're a bit distrustful, but after a few hours, they come to me and say a few words in their own language. Very few women speak Spanish. They examine my pale skin and a colorful bracelet I'm wearing, made by the Zuni people in New Mexico.

One of them offers to paint me, which is a great compliment. I understand the gesture also as a gentle way of including me for a short while. But I turn down the invitation, knowing I must return to Bogotá in two days to catch a flight to Ecuador. (I imagine the look of disbelief of the flight crew and the immigration officer.)

The Emberas are talkative and extroverted. I wonder if this is a particularity of coastal people, while mountain people are more reserved. Or perhaps it's the feeling of celebration. I meet some Elders who remember the old times when fish was plenty. I see the village guards everywhere. They are tireless, chopping wood, serving food, controlling arrivals and even playing music!

Standing in line for a community meal

People gather at the end of the day to listen to a musical group perform, while sunlight surrenders to obscurity.

Simon Majoré, a Cabildo advisor, tells me about the 800-km march to Bogotá. "It was hard – 14 days walking, then 150 nights sleeping in the city," he says. "The ministry was furious. Thankfully, other Native people and city folks came to join us. There was also international support.

"We are fighting for four principles – territory, unity, culture and self-government. Now we have won something. But people have died, because they spoke out."

Kimy Pernia also remembers the squat at the Ministry of Environment, after the long walk was over. "The government would not listen to us, but we had a lot of support," he says. "A friend of mine was killed in the process, however, as well as other important leaders. The government ended up signing, but it doesn't always fulfill its promises. Let's see what happens. If nothing happens, we shall go back to Bogotá and call for international attention."

He adds: "Please remember to thank Canadian organizations for having helped us when times were very difficult."

The assembly starts the next morning, with almost 400 participants from 15 communities. Each community delegates its power to Nokos (governors) and Nokoweras. There are senior and junior governors.

The meeting begins with people being introduced and cheered. Next, participants listen to how the agreement was won. They talk in Embera, but I catch a few Spanish words describing the strategies used: "toma pacifica" (peaceful squat), "huelga de hambre" (hunger strike), "apoyo internacional" (international support).

The next days will be devoted to a debate on how to expand and strengthen the Embera territory, now that the agreement has been signed. The people will also discuss issues of self-government, health, education, management reports and development projects.

The air is full of enthusiasm. "What shall we do next? Let's acquire land next to the

reserve," said one speaker. "Soon we will have 139,000 solid hectares. For whom? Not for anyone in particular, but for everybody's use! Why? To consolidate our territory!

"But let's make sure the agreements are respected. We must convince encroachers to leave our territory. We must protect our forest, defend our unity, our land. Let's be vigilant. Our troubles may not be over yet. If we see illegal wood-cutting or coca plants, let's not just stand there! Those activities are wounds in our territory. If we allow it to happen, if we just shut up, the coca plants will eat us alive!"

Our sons, our leaders are being killed

Nora Domico, a senior Cabildo advisor, and Ana Lucila Domico, a Nokowera, ask me to send a message to Canada: "As women, we take care of our children and we really need support for health projects, such as training workshops on how to deal with health problems resulting from the dam.

"Because of the Urra dam, there's not enough of the right kind of food, and new sicknesses have appeared. Also, we cry because our sons, our leaders are being killed. People from outside our community have come to harm us."

For Colombia's first nations, the sea, rivers and lakes are part of the sacred origin of life. Rivers are like the veins of Mother Earth, say the Emberas. The Great Tree released water for all beings to drink and live. As writer Ana Maria Falchetti wrote for an exhibit in Colombia's Gold Museum: "Rivers become the paths of ancestors. The river lives, breathes and moves. The river has a memory; it tells stories of ancient times, when fish were people and when our ancestors traveled along the rivers, as paths leading to the world below."

When I left the community, the rain started pouring heavily. I remembered Miguel rescuing a sloth caught in the branches of a dead tree standing in the rising waters. When the canoe reached the village, he lifted the strange animal carefully up from the boat, carried it to shore and brought him to a tree he likes to live in.

The sad-faced and sluggish animal climbed the tree almost in a hurry. Miguel was delighted. I couldn't help thinking, fearfully, that Miguel's name may figure among the ones on AUC's hit list.

Four months later, on September 16, Miguel and his daughter were on their way up the Sinú River with 18 other Emberas and a non-Native advisor. They were carrying equipment to help repopulate their river with fish.

Just before reaching the community, they were stopped by a group of men with guns. Two of the passengers were immediately released. Five days went by before the others were freed – fortunately – after the anxiety of not knowing what may happen to them in the hands of the paramilitary.

The same day as the kidnapping, three other Emberas were killed by the same troops, and another by the guerrilla. "The armed group refused to acknowledge our traditional authorities and claimed they would not leave our territory until they finished their mission," said the Cabildos in a statement.

"Our communities are not involved in this conflict. We keep asking all armed groups, legal and illegal, to stay out of our territory and to not convert it into a war zone."

On October 29, armed men from the FARC guerrilla killed two Emberas and told others they had a list of 60 community members on their death list. This is the Cabildos' answer: "Until when will armed groups keep despising our lives, our territory, our culture? Aren't all the abuses, attacks and calumny against us already enough? Once again, we reiterate our refusal to be linked to an armed conflict that is not ours and that others are trying to submit us to, under gunpoint. They will not silence our voices by intimidating us or by spreading death and desolation."

A few months ago, U.S. President Bill Clinton visited Colombia to deliver $862 million, most of it earmarked for training, advising and supplying the army. He said: "This is not Vietnam, neither is it Yankee imperialism."

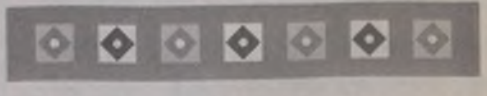
The aid was approved by the Congress as part of the U.S. war against drugs. It is meant to help "Plan Colombia," a strategy that Colombian President Andres Pastrana rewrote several times before it convinced U.S. legislators.

But the U.S. funds will flow into the coffers of an army known to have committed countless human rights violations and collaborated with death squads. The Colombian government's military operations are geared mostly towards regions dominated by the leftist guerrilla, as if there were no drugs in paramilitary regions.

The aid package will make AUC feel strong and all the more secure. Carlos Castaño, their leader, claims that there are no innocents among his victims. There are only "suspects."

We have seen that the Emberas belong to those he considers as "suspects." They are therefore all the more in danger, since U.S. legislators have decided to support the Colombian state instead of civil organizations such as human-rights committees and Native councils.

I fear that Embera lives are now even more in danger...



This is the sixth of our seven-part series on First Nations peoples in Latin America. Montreal filmmaker Mary Ellen Davis is the project coordinator of this special series of stories.

Produced with the support of the Government of Canada through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

CREE SPOKEN HERE

BY XAVIER KATAQUAPIT

I recently had the opportunity to view "Cree Spoken Here," a film about the Crees of James Bay and made by the Crees of James Bay. This film is one that every First Nation person should see. It documents the history dealing with the disintegration of the Cree language and culture. It was a good experience for me to see and understand what my people have gone through.

Our culture and our language have survived regardless of what the religious community and governments have tried to do in their quest to assimilate us into the mainstream. Without really blaming anyone in a harsh way, this film follows the trail of the religious people who came into the communities and had an affect on the language and culture. In some ways these people helped to preserve the language by putting it down in writing called syllabics. It also deals with the government's programs of residential schools with first-hand accounts of the disastrous effects of these policies, which are described in interviews with our people who endured this treatment.

It was obvious to me that there was a great sensitivity and healing as part of this production. Neil Diamond, a director-writer of "Cree Spoken Here," experienced first-hand what it was like in the residential school system. He and producer-director-writer Ernest Webb and executive producer Catherine Bainbridge, all of Rezolution Pictures based in Montreal, did a remarkable job in digging out the pain that these policies caused for First Nation people.

I can identify, as can many of our people with this film. My mother and my father went through the residential school program. It was difficult to watch the school pictures pop up in front of me showing the innocent young faces of Cree boys and girls who had been taken away from their parents, put in an unfamiliar setting and instructed not to speak their language. It was heart-breaking to hear the personal accounts from residential school survivors as they talked about feeling worthless and dirty as children.

I liked the way this film deals with the pain of the residential school system and its negative affect on our language, culture and traditions. The film works because it doesn't stay stuck in this dark history but moves on to a story of hope and a rebirth of the language and culture through the dedication of some very strong Cree women. Through the commitment of people like the late Annie Whiskeychan and others the Cree language is making a comeback. The students at Wiinebekuu School in Waskaganish First Nation are speaking their Cree language today.

In viewing this film I was also made aware that we Crees are very special. Most of the First Nation languages have either disappeared or fallen away to a great degree, but up in the James Bay coast our language is alive and well. This is probably because we have always been isolated from the rest of the world. It also brought me to the conclusion and the understanding that those communities which have lost their language and their culture and their traditions are the ones that suffer most with all types of dysfunction.

It was good to see Elders George and Louisa Diamond of Waskaganish First Nation going about the ways of our people as part of their daily routine. I saw my own family and friends in the way they live. These two Elders give the film a grounding and allow us a glimpse into their lives.

The film will be broadcast for the second time on the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN), February 7, at 8 p.m. and 11 p.m. "Cree Spoken Here" helps us all to understand some of the history of First Nation people and through that understanding it gives us a little more insight into just who we are. Meegwetch to Neil, Ernest and Catherine of Rezolution Pictures for giving me a look at our people that makes me proud and hopeful. If you want more information on "Cree Spoken Here" you can contact Rezolution Pictures at 514-272-3077.

Holiday Greetings

Merry Christmas

and a Happy New Year,
from my friend Santa Claus and me.
Elsa and I wish you all the best in the new year.

Grand Chief Ted Moses

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CREE REGIONAL AUTHORITY
ADMINISTRATION RÉGIONALE CRIE

First Cree Artists and Craftsmen Assembly Of Eeyou Istchee

Twenty-five years after the signing of the James Bay Agreement a group of fifty artists and artisans (craft producers) from the nine communities of Eeyou Istchee met for the first time in an Assembly, from November 21-23, to display their work and discuss their common preoccupations. Following the three-day event, an Association was born and a founding group of twenty members was set up to address the issues of Eeyou artists and artisans. Section 28.7 of the James Bay Agreement, which had never been implemented, says that it will support a Cree Native Arts and Crafts program. It says that, in addition to a Cree Native Arts and Crafts association, they would develop Cree Native Arts and Crafts and create a local Arts and Crafts Committee in each Cree community. The assembly agreed on the viability of setting up a structure to accommodate the application of a Cree Native Arts and Crafts Association that would in the future establish a Central Marketing Service, which would help individuals and the communities in marketing and related services. It would also make available materials or equipment that may be required to create native arts and objects. All three signatories, Canada, Quebec and the Grand Council agreed to sit down and assist the Association once it is created in its objectives and operation at the signing of the JBNQA.

All of the Chiefs in the last council Board Meeting recognized the Association and gave it their support.

Under the direction of the CRA this event was organized following a survey done in the Eeyou Istchee amongst 400 artists and artisans. This assembly had, as a first objective, to create a feeling of solidarity amongst artists and artisans, to encourage exchange between the different disciplines, and to discuss the feasibility of an association. This was achieved in more than one-way and left artists and artisans excited about the possibilities. Being artists who came together, some for the first time, they did more than just talk; they created a work of art together as one. It will not be sold, but kept as a part of Cree history in the making.

Amongst the group present a group of 20 members were decided upon as a founding group. To ensure full representation of all sectors, 1 active artisan from each community was appointed, 2 seats are reserved for representatives of the performing arts, 4 seats were appointed for representation from the Cree artistic community and 4 seats for representatives from the youth artists and or artisans.

The founding members are: 1) from the Artistic Community: Sheila Orr, Minnie Matoush, Glenna Matoush, Morley Stewart and Jimmy Otter, 2) Community reps: Mistissini- William Shecapio, Whapmagoostui- Jimmy George, Chisasibi- Peter Crow, Wemindji- Josephine Atsynia, Eastmain- (Unnamed), Waskaganish- Susan Moses, Senneterre- Dennis Saganash, Waswanipi- Charlotte Dixon, Oujé-Bougoumou- Caroline Mianscum, Nemaska- (unnamed)

3) Performing Arts- (Unnamed (2) and Youth Reps are Marco Voyageur, Teddy Otter, Kevin Mianscum and Natazia Mukash.

The assembly produced two statements to present to the Eeyou Leadership and these will constitute the working objectives of the Association to be incorporated in the near future

Artists and Craftsmen Statement

We as visual artists and craftsmen of Eeyou Istchee, having met in an assembly for the first time in Chisasibi, wish to:

1. Be recognized by our own communities as vital members who hold a spe-

COMMUNITY VISITS OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE CREE SCHOOL BOARD

At the end of March 2000, the Cree School Board invited representatives from each community to meet and discuss the results of the Mianscum Report and at this meeting, hopefully reach a consensus as to how the Cree School Board, as a whole, would arrive at addressing all issues that were outlined in this report.

From this initial meeting, the Cree School Board created four (4) major working groups or teams. Each team was assigned issues relevant to their work field or expertise and since have begun to develop action plans that are representative of the best thinking of each group. However, there remains one (1) important mandate that is still outstanding and that is to create one (1) steering committee for each community.

The Mianscum Report outlined twenty (20) major concerns or problem areas that need to be addressed at the local level. These crucial issues are considered by the majority of the people of Eeyou Istchee as the main obstacles that prevent a huge percentage of our students from successfully completing their studies at the Secondary level. It will be the responsibility of each steering committee to determine which issues from these original twenty (20) assigned to them are the most urgent and require immediate attention.

The responsibility of creating these teams or committees were given to each School Commissioner. As the people's representative on the Council of Commissioners, the Chairperson of the Cree School Board has the obligation to provide support and to do what is possible in order to ensure that this mandate is carried out. At the last meeting of the Council of Commissioners on December 5, 6 & 7, 2000, the Commissioners determined the schedule of the community visits of the Chairperson at which time, every effort will be made to begin the initial process in each community. The following are the dates as determined:

2001

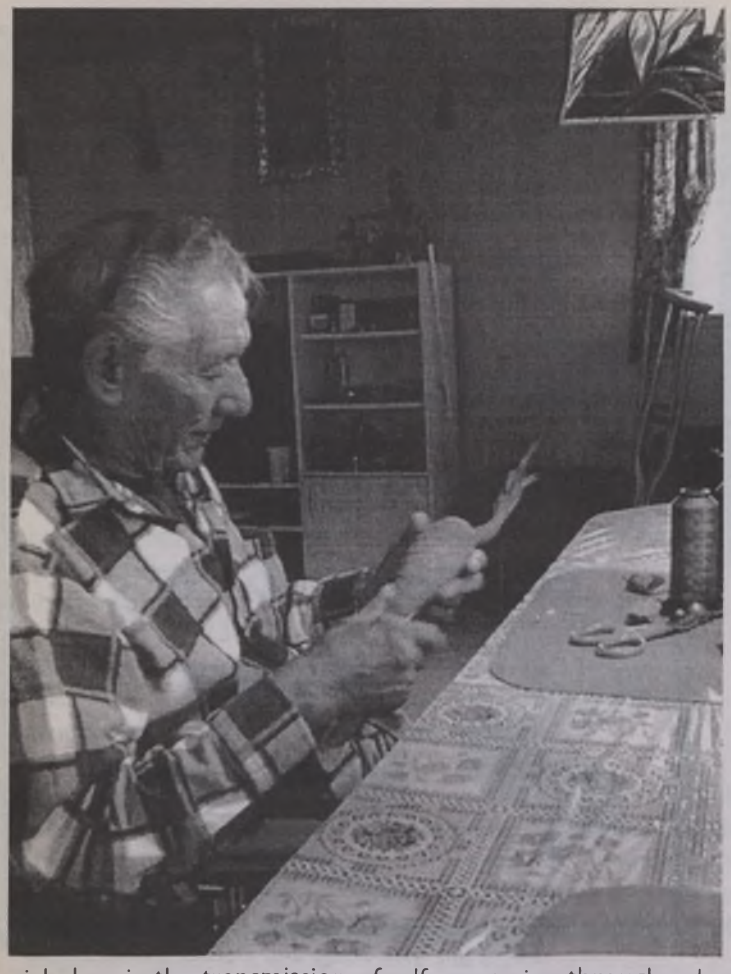
2001	
January 7 to January 11:	WHAPMAGOOSTUI
January 15 and 16 & February 1 & 2:	MISTISSINI
(Local Education Conference held November 1, 2 & 3)	
January 22 to January 26:	WASWANIPI
February 5 to February 9:	WASKAGANISH
February 19 to February 20: (Committee already in place)	WEMINDJI
February 21 to February 23	CHISASIBI
February 26 to March 2: (Local Education Conference to take place at the same time)	CHISASIBI
March 5 to March 9: (Regular Commissioners meeting)	NEMASKA
March 6, 7 & 8)	
March 12 to 16:	OUJE-BOUGOUMOU
March 19 to 21:	NEMASKA
March 22 & 23	EASTMAIN
March 26 to 28:	EASTMAIN
March 29 & 30:	MISTISSINI

The Cree School Board, by commissioning the consultation process in 1999, acknowledged that there are serious issues that needed to be corrected or improvements to be made at all levels within the education structure and process if we are to make education accessible to all and to ensure greater success for each student. We also acknowledged that parents and community are essential partners in education and that we needed the support and contribution of both if the Cree School Board is to make any substantial progress or achieve successful results in addressing all the issues including those that are assigned to the local steering committees.

However it is also important for people to remember that these visits will initiate only the beginnings of carrying out this extensive mandate. Other visits will need to be scheduled throughout the year and in subsequent years as they are needed. Meanwhile, we should all seriously consider this question, "who is responsible for the education of our children and our grandchildren and is this responsibility never-ending?"

We encourage everyone to come out and participate in the sessions and meetings that are being planned during these visits and hopefully we, the people of Eeyou Istchee, will begin to understand each other's roles and responsibilities in educating our future. After all, it is true that children are our future and we owe it to them to ensure that the foundation and support is there from which they can continue to build and reinforce Eeyou Chiskotamachaoun for their own future.

In the meantime, on behalf of the Council of Commissioners and all management and personnel of the Cree School Board, we wish you all the happiest of Christmases and a safe New Year filled with love and hope to begin the new millennium!



cial place in the transmission of self-expression through cultural means.

2. Control an organization, which will assist artists and craftsmen in their quest for financial, promotional, technical and/or training support.

3. Inform communities of creative achievements and opportunities through newsletters published by seasons.

4. Provide access to existing resources or new ones, which will become available.

5. Design web pages to promote our arts and crafts to a larger audience.

6. Document and record Cree artists and craftsmen work.

7. Conduct educational workshops on skill improvement and marketing.

8. Organize and entertain communication with other aboriginal artists in the Americas (Native Land)

9. Organize and participate in local, regional, national and international exhibitions.

10. Ensure an annual gathering or assembly of artists and craftsmen to exchange on recent productions and encourage surfacing talent.

11. Create an annual group show for artists in and out of Eeyou Istchee.

12. Establish a community-based link.

13. Contact international parties interested in hosting Cree cultural and artistic events.

14. Hire professional curators when needed for group exhibition; ensuring some harmony in the exhibition and proper promotion of the show.

15. Define arts and crafts by field: visual and performing arts i.e. theatre, music (traditional and contemporary), film, photography, writers, storytellers, dance (traditional and contemporary) identify and document artists and artisans (craft producers).

16. Report to the communities through the Nation and other native media channels.

17. Convey the results of this meeting to members present and absent.

19. Receive training on the economic and marketing aspects of our work.

20. Convince the Cree School Board of the importance of art to be taught in school and include our art in the history curriculum. We also feel that arts and crafts could receive special attention on the economics curriculum and in the career choice opportunities.

21. Retain full control over our own path.

22. Conserve, protect, and promote Quebec James Bay Cree arts and crafts.

Since youth participation was significant at this conference, and represents a significant portion of upcoming talent, and is instrumental in the development and the representation of the arts, they have issued an additional statement

Youth Artists and Craftsmen

1. We are Young artists and craft producers of Eeyou Istchee.

2. We see ourselves as role models for the youth who are interested in creative development.

3. We want to carry on traditional skills.

4. We want to encourage artistic expression amongst our fellow youth, and universal communication through artistic expression.

5. We want access to training from our expert elders and other artistic experts.

6. We are hoping to be recognized by the Cree leadership and be given equal opportunities in the allocation of funding towards youth development such as sports and recreation.

The assembly has decided that they wish to inform all interested Cree about this new organization. They'll also be looking at the 400 questionnaires to see what Cree artists and artisans see as important, and look for experts to train people and ways to help them. In the future we can expect to see more Crees on the Board of Directors as well as having the Association incorporated. Training programs are being planned for the summer. Finally, the Association will prepare an operating budget and begin negotiations to get funding and set up the organization to operate on a daily basis.

For any information concerning the newly formed Association you can get in touch with Ann Marie Awashish in Mistissini at 418-923 3285

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We wish everyone a
very happy
and prosperous
New Year!

Chisasibi Centre Inc.

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Tel.:(1819) 855-2838

The staff of the
Chisasibi Centre Inc.
would like to wish
everyone a very
Happy
New Year!!

The Cree Nation of
Waskaganish Band

Wishes everyone a
very Happy
New Year!

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Odjick Joins The Sinking Ship

by Brian Zelnicker

It was quite a week for professional sports. Mario Lemieux, part owner of the Pittsburgh Penguins, announced his retirement from retirement. The legendary superstar will once again don the familiar number 66 and attempt to lead his employees, I mean teammates, to the Stanley Cup. A chap by the name of Alex Rodriguez signed himself a sweet little deal that will pay him the tidy sum of $252 million (U.S.) over ten years to, get this, play baseball. And, unknown to most of the world, the Montreal Canadiens traded forward P.J. Stock and a 6th round draft pick to the Philadelphia Flyers for the rugged Gino Odjick on Thursday, December 7, coincidentally the same day that the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour, but that's another story.

It was quite a week for Odjick, the Vancouver Canuck's fifth choice (86th overall) in the 1990 NHL entry draft. First he was traded to Montreal, then his wife gave birth. Gino is now the proud father of seven kids, and all this by the age of 30! Where does he find the time to play hockey? Odjick, from Maniwaki, Que., now has the opportunity to play for the once great franchise that he dreamed of playing for as a young boy. His acquisition doesn't guarantee Montreal a playoff spot (unless he suddenly blossoms into a 30-40 goal scorer overnight), but he does bring his formidable physical presence to the team and he might even chip in a few goals here and there.

P.J. Stock is as game as anyone in the league, and backed down from no one, but due to injuries to other local tough guys like Enrico Ciccone, now retired after playing only three games in a Canadiens jersey, Stock, officially listed at 5'10" and 190 pounds, was left with the unenviable task of doing battle with NHL heavyweights night after night. Odjick, at 6'3" and 217 pounds, brings some much-needed size to a team that is struggling at just about every aspect of the game. It's not that the Habs aren't tough enough, they're just not intimidating enough. In the past year we lost the services of Shayne Corson, Turner Stevenson, and Scott Thornton, three guys who brought a hard-nosed attitude to the rink every time they played. While it is true that size isn't everything, it certainly doesn't hurt.

Poor Gino, he might be playing for the dream team of his childhood years, but they're looking more and more like a nightmare on skates. Odjick's first shift against Ottawa last Saturday resulted in a penalty and, lo and behold, the Senators scored while the former Laval junior cooled off in the sin bin. The Habs went on to lose the game 4-2, and were outshot by an incredible 24-1 margin in the third period. The newest member of the Canadiens might as well get used to it, as there are many nights like that if you're wearing the red, white, and blue these days.

Wednesday night's tussle with Calgary, not exactly one of the league's elite teams, provided fans with more of the same. Did I say fans? In fact, the announced attendance of 18,337, in a building that holds 21,273, was the smallest crowd at the Molson Centre since the Canadiens relocated there in 1996. There were also an estimated 3,000 empty seats due to no shows. The devoted who did bother to turn out, got to see Odjick nailed with a five minute penalty in the first period after laying a concussion on Flames defenseman Phil Housley. Calgary scored on the power play, and added another goal just six seconds after the penalty expired. "We had a 3-on-2 and Housley was hooking me from behind," said Odjick. "I just swung my arm back to lose him. I don't know where the ref got that five-minute penalty from. I barely brushed him." Coach Michel Therrien laid the blame directly on the newest Hab, suggesting that, "Gino's penalty cost us two goals."

While Odjick isn't exactly off to a great start, it would be sheer madness to blame the team's woes on him. How bad are the Habs right now? Well, let's just say that they might do well to try and raise the spirits of Maurice Richard, Doug Harvey, and Jacques Plante from the grave to help right this sinking ship. With their track record in recent years they probably have a better chance of communicating with the dead than they do of scouting talent and drafting well. As for Gino, keep you chin up lad, it'll get a helluva lot worse before it gets better.

Conseil Cri de la santé et des services sociaux de laBaie James

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The Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay

JOBS

The Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay is a Cree entity responsible for the administration of health and social services for all residents under its jurisdiction. This jurisdiction comprises nine Cree communities and their surrounding territories.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Please be advised that there are numerous positions for the purpose of the recall list available within your community on a continuing basis. All interested applicants are reminded that these positions are accessible at the following locations:

- local band council
- local hospitals/clinics
- job banks

For further details
please do not hesitate to contact:
Human Resources Management
Cree Board of Health & Social Services of James Bay
Chisasibi, Quebec J0M 1E0
Tel: (819) 855-2844 ext. 5340
Fax: (819) 855-2680
E-mail: hrmgmt@cancom.net

CREE NATION OF WEMINDJI

Wishes all a bright and prosperous New Year in 2001!

P.O. Box 360
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James Bay, JOM 1RO
Tel.: 819-895-2005
Fax: 819-895-2008

The staff and management of
AUBERGE KANIO-KASHEE LODGE
Would like to wish a very Happy New Year!

Ouje-Bougoumou
Cree Nation

Happy 2001! from all the staff at Ouje

CLASSIFIEDS

100 – Birthdays

I wanted to send a happy birthday to two special people: my mom Emma Longchap on Dec.07/00 and to my sister Hattie Longchap on Dec.27/00. May the two of you have a wonderful birthday because you deserve it. Once again happy birthday and many more to come. From:Dauther & sister Rachel

Happy belated birthday to my friend Jamie Jacob from Wask who celebrated on the 13th of December. May your days and years ahead be filled with love and happiness, also Merry Christmas to you and your family. Friend always Celina (Nem.)

103- anniversaries

Happy 19th wedding anniversary on the 19th of December to my love, my everything – Jimmy W. Cooper. I love you more than ever. Thank you for being a good husband and a good father to our two lovely children: Larissa and Jonah. We love you and may God bless you. Love, Chicky.

300 – Personals

Merry Christmas and happy New Year to our childhood friend, "Mini-Me". Take care and enjoy your Christmas holidays. P.S. All I want to Christmas is your father as a gift. From your childhood friends (Guess who!)

I would like to say a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to my kids, Summer and Ricky and to my girlfriend, Debralee. Thanks for waiting for me and to my family! Hope you all have a great time during the holiday season and get what you all asked for. From Bill – Nemaska. P.S. Mom and Dad, Thanks for everything! I love you both.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all Eeyouch especially to my parents Charlie and Bessie Blackned. Also to my brothers, Bill, John, Chris, Kirby, Silas, Travis, and to my sisters Maryann, Cynthia, Sharon. To my girlfriend and children, Annette Diamond, Mariah and Donovan. I love you all. Best wishes! From Jimbo (Nemaska)

Hey There " PETE", Comment Ca va? It sure has been a long time!! Days pass and time dwindles away... Yet not a day goes by when I don't think of you. I still miss you my friend, I hope you are well!!! I hope this Christmas finds you in good health and in great spirits!!! I love you, please don't forget that, you are always on my mind!! Merry Christmas Babe,

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With preference given to candidates with an accounting designation and significant, successful experience in financial management in a related institution or First Nations Organization, the CFO must possess an education in Business Administration, Commerce or Public Administration or experience in related fields.

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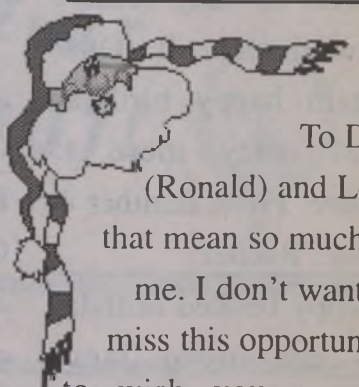
HIGGINS INTERNATIONAL INC.

Best Wishes for the New Year!!! Soar High with the Eagles, Fidelio.

I would like to wish a Merry Christmas to John Iserhoff in Chisasibi, hey how are you doing? Fine I hope, from girl 2343



To Dad (Ronald) and Lora that mean so much to me. I don't want to miss this opportunity to wish you a very Merry Christmas & hope the year 2001 brings you happiness and prosperity.

Happy New Year Dad!

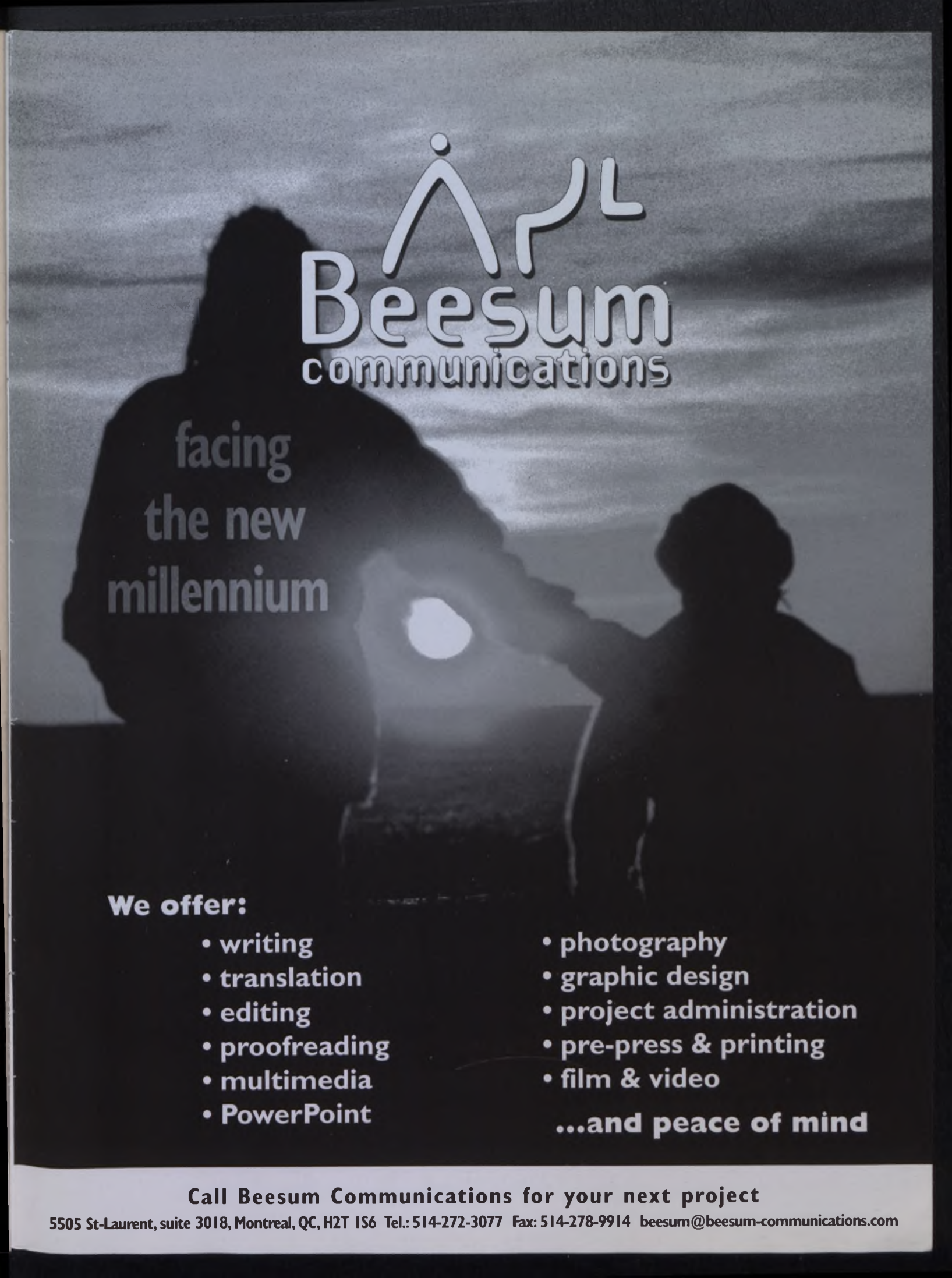
Party!!

Love your daughter
Annette Wabie

xxx...

Yaroooh! Yaroooh!

to Bryan - Valerie - Chris - Andrew (& Patrick)
A very
Merry X-mas
from us to
All of You!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